Amendments to the Drawings:

Figs. 1 and 2 have been amended to add labels to boxes 11,

12 and 21-26 in accordance with the description in the

specification at page 4, lines 5-19.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

Annotated Sheet Showing Changes

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

THE SPECIFICATION

The specification has been amended to make some minor grammatical improvements. No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the specification be approved and entered.

THE DRAWINGS

Figs. 1 and 2 have been amended to add labels to boxes 11, 12 and 21-26 in accordance with the description in the specification at page 4, lines 5-19. Submitted herewith is a corrected sheet of formal drawing which incorporates the amendments and an annotated sheet showing the changes made thereto. No new matter has been added.

THE CLAIMS

Independent claims 1, 12 and 22 have been amended to clarify that the ░product░ is an image forming apparatus, as well as to incorporate the subject matter of claims 2-3, 13-14 and 23-24, respectively.

In addition, claims 1, 12 and 22 have been amended to clarify that the image forming apparatus of the user is accessed through a <u>computer</u> network, as recommended by the Examiner in order to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 101.

Still further, claims 22, 25-30 and 33 have been amended to recite a computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code stored thereon for causing a computer to execute the claimed functions to manage the change in hardware, along the lines suggested by the Examiner in order to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 101.

Claims 22, 25-30 and 33, moreover, have also been amended to avoid the use of ▒means plus function▒ language.

And finally, claims 4-11, 15-21 and 25-33 have been amended to better accord with amended independent claims 1, 12 and 22.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered and that the rejections under 35 USC 101 be withdrawn.

THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 1-33 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of US Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0156692 (▒Squeglia et al▒). This rejection, however, is respectfully traversed with respect to the claims as amended hereinabove.

According to the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1 (and corresponding amended independent apparatus claim 12 and amended independent computer program code claim 22), a method is provided for managing a change in hardware, which comprises accessing an image forming apparatus of a user through a computer network and acquiring information on the apparatus of the user. Information is acquired on a part to be changed, and information is generated on the image forming apparatus that requires the part change, from the information on the apparatus of the user and the information on the part to be changed. As recited in the amended claims, the information on the apparatus that requires the part change is provided to a terminal operated by a maintenance administrator, and a number of parts to be changed is calculated based on the information on the apparatus that requires the part change.

With this technique, even if there is a problem with the hardware in an image forming apparatus, it is not necessary for a service technician to physically go to the location of the apparatus to check the apparatus, since the information on the apparatus that requires the part change is sent to the terminal operated by the maintenance administrator. In addition, according to the claimed present invention, the number of parts to be replaced is calculated, so that a maintenance center can quickly and easily send out an order for the required part.

Squeglia et al, by contrast, relates to a system for managing the supply of replacement parts to a railroad locomotive, and it is respectfully submitted that Squeglia et al has nothing to do with the method (or apparatus or computer program) for managing a change in hardware in <u>an image forming apparatus</u> as according to the present invention as recited in the amended claims.

In addition, it is respectfully submitted that Squeglia et al does not disclose, teach or suggest the feature of the claimed present invention whereby the number of parts to be changed is calculated based on the information on the apparatus that requires the part change. In this connection, it is respectfully pointed out that paragraph [0035] of Squeglia et al (which the Examiner contends discloses this feature) merely discloses that repair trend information may be compiled for analysis. And it is respectfully submitted that Squeglia et al does not specifically disclose, teach or suggest that the number of parts <u>to be changed</u> is calculated based on the information on the apparatus, so that, for example, a maintenance center may quickly and easily order the required part, in the manner of the present invention as recited in amended independent claims 1, 12 and 22.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claims 1, 12 and 22, as well as claims 4-11, 15-21 and 25-33 respectively depending therefrom, all patentably

distinguish over Squeglie et al under 35 USC 102 as well as

under 35 USC 103.

* *

Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the

passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or

recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the

undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt

action.

Respectfully submitted,

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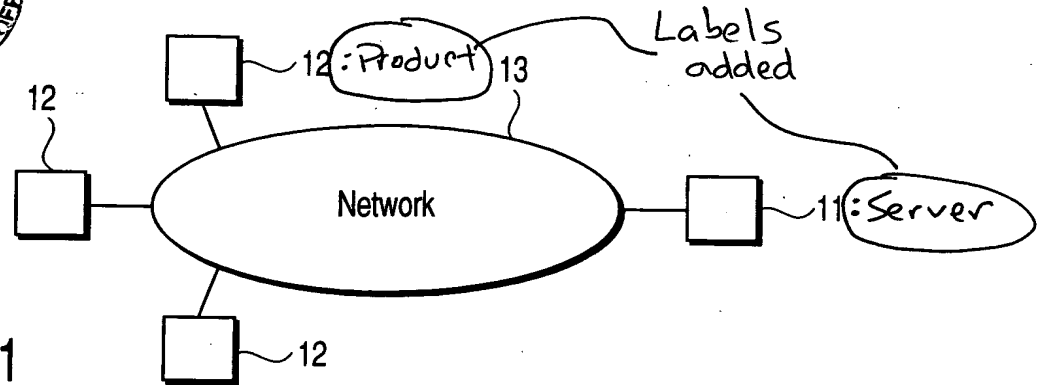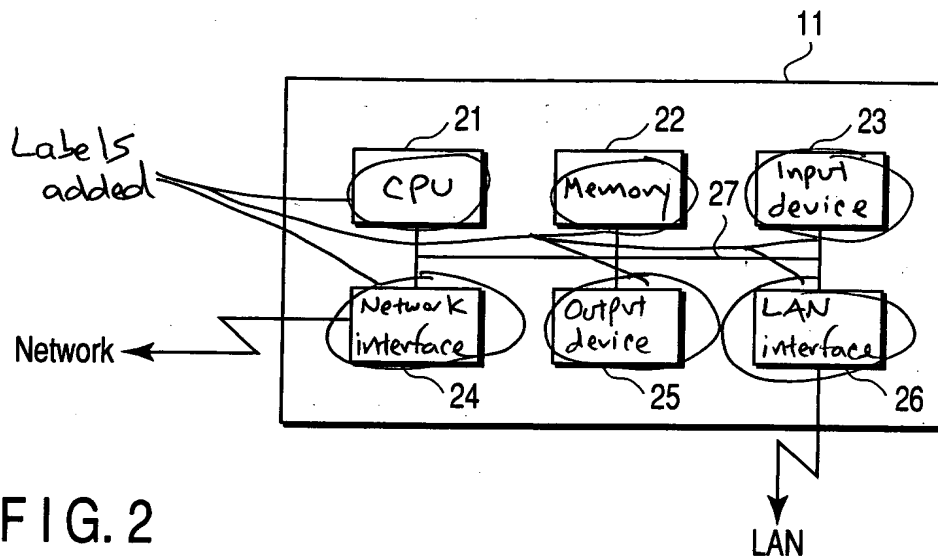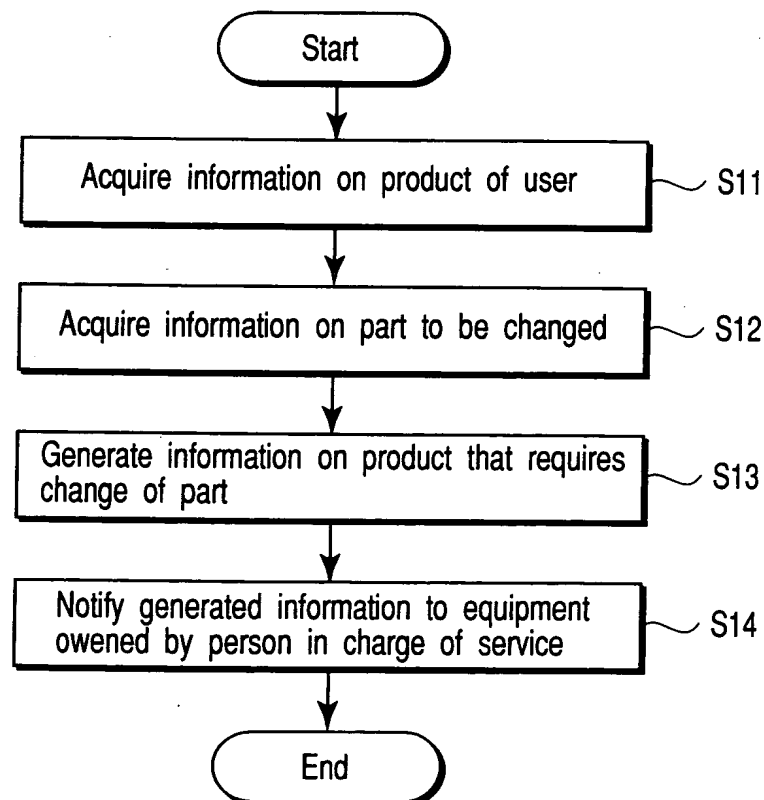Fax No. (212) 319-5101

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Labels
added

12 : Product 13

11 : Server

Network

12

12

FIG. 1

11

Labels
added

21 CPU   22 Memory   27   23 Input device

Network

Network interface   Output device   LAN interface

24   25   26

LAN

FIG. 2

Start

Acquire information on product of user — S11

Acquire information on part to be changed — S12

Generate information on product that requires change of part — S13

Notify generated information to equipment owened by person in charge of service — S14

End

FIG. 3